



**This reader tip travels smart**

When packing jewelry for traveling, no velvet-lined sleeves or pouches for Jackie Austin of Rock Rapids, Iowa. Instead, she raids her kitchen pantry for this clever safe-keeper that keeps her valuables knot- and trouble-free.

"I keep my matching necklace and earring sets in separate zip-lock baggies," she writes, "keeping the necklace top clasp sticking just out the top of the zipped baggie. This keeps the necklace from tangling."

**Do you have a bright idea?** Send us your clever tips for making life a little easier. Share them at [livesmart.usaweekend.com](http://livesmart.usaweekend.com).

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**Gift ideas that deliver tasty memories**



**T**HANKS TO SITES such as Etsy and Pinterest, handmade and homemade are more popular than ever. In fact, making your own gifts can save you time and money, says Lucy Baker, author of *Edible DIY: Simple, Giftable Recipes to Savor and Share*.

Even with limited ingredients and cooking experience, you can make edible gifts with gourmet flair. "People are always more impressed if you give them a jar of jam you made yourself, and it's way cheaper to make it yourself," Baker says. Ingredients can cost only \$15 and make five to eight jars of jam.

Plan ahead to concoct a variety of gifts to have at the ready. When raspberries are in season,

make a batch of Raspberry-Lime Liqueur, which can be stored for a year and handed out at parties along the way, she suggests.

Recipes such as Sweet and Spicy Walnuts or Lemony Sweet Tea Vodka, a homemade infused liquor, aren't as intimidating to create as they sound, she adds.

"People think it's going to be really hard and time-consuming, and they're going to buy a lot of ingredients, which is really not the case," she says.

Even if your gift is a simple cookie recipe, original packaging can add a personal touch.

"Be creative with old takeout containers," Baker says. "Things like ribbons, buttons and dried flowers are great for decorating."

— Haley Goldberg

**Curb time 'savers' that only slow you down**

**F**EELING overwhelmed is like placing yourself in a pressure cooker — there's always a boiling point. Laura Stack, productivity expert and author of *What to Do When There's Too Much to Do*, identifies two seemingly helpful areas that may be preventing you from organizing your life around tasks that really matter.

**Reset your to-do list.** Many people confuse activity with productivity when creating their to-do lists. Rather than doing things in order of appearance, Stack believes in creating check-



lists categorized by levels of urgency.

"Say you do nine out of

10 things on your list, but the one you didn't do was the most important," Stack says. "Doing more is overrated. You need to reduce, reduce, reduce."

**Reduce gadget dependency.** Procrastination will have you leaving work every day feeling dissatisfied rather than with a sense of accomplishment, and, for Stack, the biggest time-wasters can be technology. "The

blinking light on your phone, the buzz you got from an incoming text, the beep from a new e-mail" — these distractions have almost become "an addiction," she says. It requires self-discipline to distance yourself from these external disruptions.

Think of it as a battle between two competing voices, she suggests. "Are you going to open [a document] and start working on your important report, or are you going to open your browser and check your Facebook?"

— Shawn Ghuman